

FREE EAST TIMOR JAPAN COALITION

14 June 1988

Mr. Benny Murdani,
Minister of Defense
The Indonesian Embassy
5-2-9, Higashi Gotanda
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102

Dear Mr. Murdani,

We, a coalition of citizens' groups concerned about the issue of East Timor, take the opportunity of your present visit to Japan to address you on this issue. Knowing of your intimate involvement in the process that lead up to the annexation of East Timor by Indonesia nearly thirteen years ago and of the leading role you have played in the attempt to "secure" the territory of East Timor through the intervention of the Indonesian armed forces, we well appreciate the vital interest that you have in achieving a settlement of the East Timor issue.

Sad to say, the military operations which have been conducted in East Timor over the past twelve and a half years cannot be said to have contributed to the security of East Timor or Indonesia. Where, thirteen years ago, there was no conflict, there is now endemic conflict.

We believe that a fundamentally different approach, a political approach, holds the only hope of changing the pattern of violence in East Timor.

In saying this, we do not lose sight of the fact that you have encouraged the promotion of "development" for East Timor in addition to military security measures. However, given the fact that this "development" is being imposed on East Timor by a government the East Timorese consider to be alien, we cannot but conclude that it too is a form of violence. We can see, from the history of Indonesia itself, why this is true. During the colonial period, the Dutch imposed various "development" policies like the Ethical Policy on the people of the Dutch East Indies. The indigenous people, however, rejected this kind of foreign-imposed development. Their struggle against it, a struggle which resulted in the achievement of independence and the creation of the Republic of Indonesia, is part of history, and is a particularly glorious page in history.

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The political solution which we urge you to consider could be achieved through the process which the United Nations General Assembly called for in its resolution 37/30. This is, as you know, negotiations between the "parties concerned." That the main party concerned in the conflict, the East Timorese, have not been included in these U.N.-sponsored discussions is the obvious reason for their lack of substantial progress. To us, the main reason for this lack of serious commitment to negotiated settlement appears to be the over-riding emphasis of your government on achieving a military solution to the East Timor issue.

Understandably, a nation involved in hostilities looks to military victory to confirm the rightness of its cause. However, as the recent wars in Asia fought respectively by the two super powers show, the wisest course sometimes dictates military withdrawal. The recently begun withdrawal of the Soviet Army from Afghanistan, far from diminishing the world's regard for the Soviet Union, has enhanced it and, in fact, contributed greatly to the thawing of East-West tension, the fruits of which were seen in the recent super power summit meeting.

We urge you to do your utmost to redeem the honor of Indonesia, sullied by nearly thirteen years of military intervention in East Timor, by beginning a course of military disengagement from East Timor and support for a U.N.-supervised negotiated settlement that includes members of the East Timorese resistance, Fretilin and U.D.T.

We submit this letter on behalf of the citizens' groups in Sendai, Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Zentsuji, Okayama, and Kure which make up the Free East Timor! Japan Coalition.

Kijima Masamichi

Fr. Jaime Coelho

Satsuki Eda, M.P.

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